

### **PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT**

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (AZRSA) has a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) had the opportunity to ask questions or give input into CSPD activities and has reviewed and approved the CSPD Plan.

#### **(a) Data System On Personnel And Personnel Development**

**Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development.**

AZRSA uses several data systems to collect personnel information. These systems includes the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) of the Arizona Department of Economic Security and an AZRSA CSPD ACCESS database. Both contain up-to-date information on all employed individuals. Ad hoc reports can be generated for each classification category to: provide affirmative action information, assist in manpower planning, track academic degree levels, identify major areas of study and qualified staff data, provide information to project retirement dates, identify diversity information, and other data as needed.

The Staff Development and Training Manager maintains additional records and documentation related to staff training, individual staff CSPD plans for retraining to meet the qualified staff standard, and professional certification records.

The agency management information system, Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS) is also utilized to determine caseload size and number of clients served to be used for forecasting future personnel needs.

From all these sources of information the qualified personnel needs and personnel development of staff are analyzed on an annual basis. Included in this analysis are:

- Number of personnel employed by personnel category.
- Determining progress in meeting the agency goals for serving rehabilitation clients with qualified staff.
- Forecasting personnel needs to include growth, turnover history, caseload sizes, succession planning, diversity management and other relevant factors.
- Educational levels of all staff for projecting budgets for tuition reimbursement and identification of training needs.
- The numbers of personnel enrolled in institutions of higher education that prepare students in rehabilitation counseling and related counseling fields.
- The progress of individuals who are working on meeting the "qualified staff" standard.
- How well staff development and training objectives for the year have been met.
- An analysis of dollars spent annually for tuition reimbursements, as well as, reimbursement for certification exams and renewals.

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### (1) Qualified Personnel Needs

The available data provide the following information about current status of qualified staff.

#### (A) Total Number of Staff

AZRSA believes that the current staffing pattern is correct to meet the needs of current clients. Staffing has increased from 249 in calendar year 2006 to our current level of 303. The number of clients served for each VR counselor for planning purposes is 106.

|  | 2006 | 2007 |
|--|------|------|
| Total Number of Staff                                    | 249  | 303  |
| Rehabilitation Services Specialist III (RSS III)         |      | 168  |
| Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation & Mobility Spec. |      | 11   |
| Rehabilitation Representative                            |      | 30   |
| Rehabilitation Supervisor                                |      | 26   |
| Rehabilitation Services Technician                       |      | 22   |

The total of new staff hired in 2007 is as follows:

|   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| Number of new positions established in 2007 |  |    |
| Rehabilitation Services Specialist III      |  | 29 |
| Rehabilitation Program Representative       |  | 0  |
| RIS and O & M Specialist                    |  | 0  |
| Supervisor                                  |  | 5  |

The following number of staff meet CSPD requirements, as follows:

|   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| Number of Rehabilitation Service Specialist III/ RIS and O&M Specialists/Program Reps/Supervisors/ Managers who Meet Qualified Staff Standard | 145 | 124 |
| Number of CSPD agreements signed by new hires   |     | 50  |
| Total CSPD agreements signed to date  |     | 106 |
| Number of new hires who met standard  |     | 5   |
| Number of qualified staff who resigned  |     | 22  |
| Number of other AZRSA staff who meet qualified staff standard   |     | 15  |

Staff who do not meet CSPD requirements are as follows:

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| Number of Rehabilitation Service Specialist III/Program Reps/ Supervisors Who Do Not Meet Standard | 104 | 111 |
|--|-----|-----|

#### (B) The number of staff currently needed to provide VR services:

AZRSA continues to be faced by high vacancy levels. There were forty-six (46)

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vacancies on March 1, 2007.

|   | 2006 | 2007 |
|---|------|------|
| 46 vacancies as of March 1, 2007                        |      |      |
| Rehabilitation Services Specialist III                  |      | 25   |
| Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation & Mobility Spec |      | 0    |
| Rehabilitation Program Representative                   |      | 9    |
| Rehabilitation Supervisor                               |      | 8    |
| Rehabilitation Technician                               |      | 4    |

#### **(C) Projections of the number of personnel who will be needed to serve VR clients in five years,**

Based on the projections of the number of individuals who will be needing services is as follows:

|  |      |        |
|--|------|--------|
| The Arizona census projects a 14% growth in population resulting in a projected increase of the potential of VR clients needing services                 |      | 24,743 |
| Projected Number of Rehabilitation Counselors to retire in next 5 yrs  | 2006 | 2007   |
| Projected Number of Program Representatives to retire in next 5 yrs  |      | 24     |
| Projected Number of Supervisors to retire in next 5 yrs  |      | 3      |
|  |      | 4      |
| Projected Number of additional staff positions (Rehabilitation Counselors and Program Representatives) needed to provide services to clients in 5 years. |      | 35     |
| Projected Number of Supervisors needed in 5 years  |      | 4      |

#### **(2) Personnel Development**

The following chart lists the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of these institutions with the necessary credentials:

|   |    |     |
|---|----|-----|
|   |    |     |
| Number of AZRSA personnel graduated to-date from University of Arizona with a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling    | 87 | 102 |
| Number AZRSA staff graduating with Masters in Counseling from other universities in 2007                              |    | 1   |
| Number of staff enrolled in University of Arizona Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling full time (2 or 3 year option) |    | 28  |

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|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Number of staff enrolled at other Colleges/University in CSPD plan (includes three enrolled in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling distance learning class, San Diego State University)  |  | 9                                       |
| Number of staff who have applied to the University of Arizona for Fall, 2007  |  | 10                                      |
| <p>The number of students enrolled in IHEs that are preparing to be vocational rehabilitation professionals:</p> <p>University of Arizona students in rehabilitation counseling programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor</li> <li>• Masters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On-campus</li> <li>○ AZRSA work study students</li> <li>○ Doctorate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Arizona State University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters in Counseling</li> <li>• Masters in Social Work</li> </ul> <p>Northern Arizona University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters in Counseling</li> </ul> <p>University of Phoenix</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters in Counseling</li> </ul> <p>Ottawa University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters in Counseling</li> </ul> <p>San Diego State University</p> <p>(Note: Data of number of students enrolled and number of students graduating is being developed.)</p> |  | <p>28</p> <p>23</p> <p>28</p> <p>18</p> |

#### **(b) Plan For Recruitment, Preparation and Retention Of Qualified Personnel.**

The development, updating, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel are as follows:

The AZRSA goal is that all staff who provide professional services to the public rehabilitation client will meet the “qualified” staff personnel standards established for Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration. The achievement of this goal is possible only when all current staff has achieved qualified standards and there are enough new qualified candidates available to meet the current and future needs of AZRSA.

Specifically, the current CSPD plan has the following objectives. These objectives and

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progress against these objectives are reviewed and updated annually:

| <i>CSPD OBJECTIVES:</i>  | <i>Completed</i> | <i>On-Going</i> | <i>In Process</i> |
|--|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Set CSPD standards   | X                |                 |                   |
| Improve RSA's personnel data system  | X                |                 |                   |
| Compile database of professional staff and their degrees   | X                |                 |                   |
| Update and report annually on CSPD status  | X                |                 |                   |
| Obtain professional development plans from all staff who don't meet AZRSA CSPD standards                                   |                  | X               |                   |
| a. Update plans annually   |                  |                 | X                 |
| b. Obtain plans for new staff  |                  | X               |                   |
| Provide training options for staff to obtain a masters degree  |                  | X               |                   |
| a. Provide tuition reimbursements for individual classes   |                  | X               |                   |
| b. Provide sponsorship of a 2 year Masters Degree program in Rehabilitation through the University of Arizona              |                  | X               |                   |
| Provide CSPD graduate rehabilitation classes, from University of Arizona to prepare for masters degree or to meet standard |                  | X               |                   |
| Commit funds to support CSPD plan  |                  | X               |                   |
| Review transcripts to provide guidance to staff regarding meeting qualified staff standard                                 |                  | X               |                   |
| Reimburse staff for CRC exam and renewal fees  |                  | X               |                   |
| Provide CRC Exam Prep class and study materials On-line University of Wisconsin-Stout Prep Class                           |                  | X               |                   |
| Increase counselor salary  | X                |                 |                   |
| Provide internship sites   |                  | X               |                   |
| Develop new strategies for recruitment and retention   |                  |                 | X                 |

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| <i>CSPD OBJECTIVES:</i>  | <i>Completed</i> | <i>On-Going</i> | <i>In Process</i> |
|--|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Change MQ's to reflect qualified staff standard                                  | X                |                 |                   |
| Establish salary incentive for staff who have or obtain qualified staff standard | X                |                 |                   |
| Increase new hires who meet qualified staff standard                             |                  | X               |                   |
| Monitor progress of CSPD plan  |                  | X               |                   |

**Analysis:** There is a need to recruit qualified applicants due to increased partnerships, client growth, and staff turnover. Based on the 2000 Census, there is a projected average increase in the Arizona population of 14% over a five year period, which will result in an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities needing services. In 2006, AZRSA received additional state match from the legislature resulting in increased funding for the rehabilitation program for SFY2007. Included in the additional funds were allocations for five new supervisor positions and 29 new counselor positions.

There continues to be competition from the private sector for qualified rehabilitation counselors. Finding individuals who meet the qualified staff standard to work in small rural offices is extremely difficult. Although qualified applicants are interviewed they do not always readily accept job offers in part due to the salary. Qualified employees sometimes leave when they discover the complexity and demands of the work involved. Reasons for leaving include: increased demand for specialized expertise in the labor market, uncertainties in the field of rehabilitation about the future of the public VR program, consumers posing complex challenges, and the AZRSA's requirements of qualified staff. In addition, qualified applicants accept job offers for the educational benefit then seek other employment after completing a degree.

In 2005, a study was conducted of the RSA graduates from the University of Arizona Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling since 1994. The study revealed 32 of the 87 graduates had resigned for the reasons listed above.

In 2006, 24 qualified staff resigned or retired and three were promoted to central office, no longer serving clients. Six were graduates of the University of Arizona, Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program and three completed degrees with educational assistance. Several counselors that resigned went to a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) and others were recruited by the Arizona State University for their Office of Student Resources. In addition, several counselors recently resigned even after completing their degree program utilizing the educational assistance program.

**Coordination:** Coordination with institutions of higher education for continuing education and recruitment has focused primarily with the University of Arizona, which is the only university in the state that has a Masters in Rehabilitation

Counseling program. Strategies are currently being developed by a strategic plan work group on recruitment and retention. As a result, plans will be established to increase communication with other state and private universities that offer a Masters degree in Counseling and Social Work. Graduates from these programs can meet the qualified staff standard with up to five additional specific course requirements that are available from the University of Arizona or other schools who have on-line programs in rehabilitation counseling.

Two AZRSA managers serve on the University of Arizona's Advisory Committee providing input regarding rehabilitation education curricula and its relevancy to the State public VR program, as well as, opportunities to discuss strategies for recruitment of graduates. An average of 40 students graduate yearly from its various rehabilitation training programs.

Two paid internship positions provide Master's students an opportunity for an internship with the public VR program. It is hoped that this may encourage students to intern in our rural areas. Our experience with interns is it often leads to employment with the state vocational rehabilitation program. In addition to internships, other joint activities include the establishment of practicum placements in local VR offices. There have been discussions with the University of Arizona to begin having presentations for on-campus students by AZRSA staff to increase the awareness of the public program as a career choice. All of these activities enhance the opportunity to recruit graduates.

Professional organizations have not provided a significant opportunity for recruitment of qualified staff. The Arizona Rehabilitation Association (ARA) has a small organization, but one with whom the state agency has a long relationship. Joint conferences have been held for many years, staff have attended "brown bag training sessions" and registration is paid for counselors to attend ARA seminars and workshops. It is hoped to offer a joint training session with ARA in 2007. The National Rehabilitation Association conference will be held in Tucson in 2007. The AZRSA training staff has offered to assist with the conference. Professional staff will be able to attend this conference.

**Recruitment of individuals with disabilities and minorities:** Recruitment of individuals with a disability and minorities remains an ongoing priority. Utilization of the agency's Project Hire (administered by AZRSA) has been an effective tool for recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities. AZRSA has begun advertising nationally in Hispanicjob.com and Asianjob.com. AZRSA has successfully recruited individuals to enroll in the University of Arizona Bachelor's in Rehabilitation Counseling program as a step in the career ladder. Employees with disabilities are provided services and accommodations to ensure that they can be successful in these programs. AZRSA has continued to increase the number of disabled and minority staff hired over the past few years. Fourteen individuals with disabilities have been hired as navigators through a Navigator Grant, and four have been promoted to rehabilitation counselors. One is in the Masters program and another has applied for the 2007 class.

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A review of statistics shows the following for filled positions as of 3-12-07:

|                         | <u>Counselors</u> |       | <u>Program Reps</u> |       | <u>Rehabilitation<br/>Techs</u> |       | <u>Supervisors</u> |       |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Male                    | 64                | (36%) | 11                  | (38%) | 2                               | (9%)  | 14                 | (54%) |
| Female                  | 116               | (64%) | 18                  | (62%) | 20                              | (91%) | 12                 | (46%) |
| Disabled                | 30                | (17%) | 2                   | (7%)  | 0                               | (0%)  | 4                  | (15%) |
| Caucasian               | 127               | (70%) | 25                  | (86%) | 10                              | (45%) | 23                 | (88%) |
| Black                   | 11                | (6%)  | 1                   | (4%)  | 1                               | (5%)  | 0                  | (0%)  |
| Asian                   | 5                 | (3%)  | 0                   | (0%)  |                                 |       | 0                  | (0%)  |
| American Indian         | 3                 | (2%)  | 0                   | (0%)  | 1                               | (5%)  | 0                  | (0%)  |
|                         | 30                | (17%) | 3                   | (10%) | 8                               | (36%) | 3                  | (12%) |
| Unspecified             | 4                 | (2%)  |                     |       | 2                               | (9%)  |                    |       |
| Total Filled Positions: | 180               |       | 29                  |       | 22                              |       | 26                 |       |

#### Arizona Population Statistics\*

63.8% Caucasian

2.9% African American

1.7% Asian

4.5% American Indian

25.3% Hispanic American

\*2000 population statistics, U. S. Census Bureau

#### (c) Personnel Standards

- (1) Standards that are consistent with any national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing, and registration.**

AZRSA considers it a priority to retain and/or hire personnel who meet national standards for rehabilitation counseling. National Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling Certification (CRCC) education and experience standards has been adopted by Arizona as the CSPD qualified staff standard. Counselors are not being required to take the CRC examination itself, but they must meet CRCC's criteria for the exam.

- (2) Steps that the State plans to take in accordance to the written plan see (b), to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet the standards . .**



Although AZRSA uses the CRCC exam eligibility requirements as the CSPD standard, all staff do not yet meet the standard. As a result, AZRSA continues to recruit, and retain staff who meets the standard and to retrain those who do not meet the qualified staff standard. All managers, supervisors and professional staff are knowledgeable about the CSPD standard and its requirements. New staff not meeting the qualifications are required to read and sign an agreement that they will meet the qualified staff standard within six years of hire.

In 2006, a three year extension of the University of Arizona and AZRSA Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) was negotiated. This on-going University of Arizona and AZRSA agreement provides for a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling for employees. This agreement has been in effect since 1990.

For the past five years, the University of Arizona has continued to provide graduate level courses in CSPD classes for AZRSA staff.

**(3) The written plan to hire and retrain personnel within the designated state unit to meet the qualified staff standard:**

**(A) Specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel**

**Personnel Process:** Since 1999, AZRSA has had a waiver from the personnel rules to allow for direct hire. This waiver reduces the time needed to complete a new hire and facilitates competition for qualified applicants in the labor market. AZRSA works closely with state personnel staff to ensure qualified applicants are placed on hiring lists when direct hire is not in effect. District managers and supervisors are encouraged to increase their efforts to recruit qualified applicants locally. The Personnel Manager works closely with supervisors regarding their staffing needs. DES has an on-line recruiting and application system, which simplifies the application process and provides on-line access to current job openings. All new hires are reviewed by the Personnel Manager and approved by the Administrator to ensure that applicants meeting the qualified staff standard are considered and hired if appropriate.

The Minimum Qualifications (MQs) for the counselor series were changed in 2004 by the State's Personnel Classifications Unit, to read "must have a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling within six years of hire." This change enables enforcement of AZRSA's requirement that counseling staff who are not CSPD qualified, must work toward obtaining a Master's degree that meets the standard.

There is an agreement requiring signatures by new staff stating that they will meet the standard in six years. Failure to provide documentation each year that they are working toward this goal could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**Salary and Incentives:** AZRSA continues to work with the Human Resource Manager of DES Personnel on strategies to assist in the recruitment and retention of employees who meet the qualified staff standard. In late 2006, a new salary package was approved for the counselor series including the Rehabilitation

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Services Specialist III, Program Representative, Rehabilitation Teacher, Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Supervisor. The salary grades and Special Recruitment Rates (SRR) were adjusted. Incumbents' salaries were increased to the new SRR or by 2.5%, whichever is greater

An Education/Certification Stipend (\$1000) was established for current and new Rehabilitation Services Specialists III, Rehabilitation Teachers, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Rehabilitation Program Representatives and Rehabilitation Supervisors who meet the qualified staff standard.

Individuals are supported in obtaining professional certification that reflects the qualified staff standard by paying for the exam fees upon notice of passing, and for renewal fees. The registration fees for an on-line CRC preparation class are paid for staff when requested. The certifications that are supported include: Certification for Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), certification by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) for Rehabilitation Teachers (RT); and for Orientation and Mobility Specialists, (O&M) certification by AER, ACVREP and National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) are accepted.

**Recruitment:** AZRSA, along with other rehabilitation state agencies and the national AZRSA office, continues to identify and implement strategies to improve recruitment and hiring practices. Participating in job fairs available in most districts, holding our own job fairs, advertising in newspapers, participating in the national job bank and minority focused employment sites, as well as, listing openings on the AZRSA Web site are some current strategies. Staff will continue to participate in on-campus job fairs in Phoenix, Tucson and Flagstaff and other rural areas. AZRSA participated in several national AZRSA studies and benefited from recommendations of these studies and plan to implement some of the marketing strategies and recommendations.

Recruitment and retention is part of AZRSA's current Strategic Plan. Objectives and strategies include: Increase the retention rate of VR Counselors, assess current recruitment practices and strategize steps for improvement. Other strategies that are being developed include feedback from employee satisfaction surveys; employee recognition; mentoring; professional leadership opportunities; and an analysis of the personnel process to identify and rectify barriers to improve the hiring process along with decreasing the time to hire. Furthermore, there are a number of strategies identified to increase the supply of applicants. Currently work groups are addressing these strategies to develop plans of action and to implement strategies.

**Retention:** In the area of retention, there is an objective in our strategic plan to increase employee satisfaction with strategies identified to accomplish this objective.

In 2006-07, three individuals have been attending the Post Employment Training in Rehabilitation (PETRA) at San Diego State University. At the request of the

Administrator, they have been working on a project to address retention. The purpose of their study is to focus on increasing the knowledge of factors contributing to the low retention rate of counselors including qualified counselors. The expected outcomes of this study will include a comprehensive review of employee satisfaction, specific recommendations for improving the employee satisfaction among the rehabilitation counseling staff and to provide tools to continue gathering information.

**Job Simplification/Restructuring:** For the past five years, AZRSA has addressed the complexity of the counselor's job as part of the agency's five year Strategic Plan. The difficulty and complexity of the rehabilitation counselor's job, combined with low salaries, has been identified as a reason for counselors leaving for other jobs. Two strategies have focused on the simplification of the Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS) and the expansion of the original pilot of four offices addressing changes in processes, work roles and other issues. The pilot was fully implemented and there is ongoing analysis so determine its effectiveness.

Additionally, work groups have worked on revising and streamlining policies, procedures and forms as part of the ongoing efforts to update the AZRSA Business Model.

**(B) The specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the qualified staff standard.**

AZRSA makes every effort to recruit and hire qualified staff, however, there continues to be a shortage of individuals who meet the qualified staff standard in Arizona. This is due to several factors: applicants unwilling to apply and accept positions with AZRSA at the State salary; lack of finding willing qualified staff to work in rural areas; and the lack of adequate number of graduates from the universities.

Until there is a sufficient supply of applicants who meet the standard to meet the hiring needs of this agency, a set time line can not be established and the minimum qualifications cannot be changed to hire only people who meet the standard.

**(C) Procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period.**

AZRSA conducts an annual analysis using the CSPD database to compare progress in meeting the standard.

**(D) The identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel who do not meet the qualified staff standard and the identification of a plan to train such individuals to meet the applicable standards.**

**Counselors:** The State of Arizona has identified the following minimum qualifications (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's)) for professional counselors

(Rehabilitation Service Specialist III and Program Representative). A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a non related field plus three years of related human service work experience, a Bachelor degree in a related field (defined) plus 2 years of human service work experience, or a Masters degree in a non related field plus one year of human service experience or a Masters degree in a related field including Rehabilitation Counseling or CRC certification.

**Rehabilitation Technicians:** The State of Arizona has identifies the following minimum qualifications (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's)). Minimum qualifications for Rehabilitation Technicians is: an Associate of Arts/Sciences or Applied Sciences in a discipline related to human services; or a High School diploma or GED and two years work experience in a vocational rehabilitation or independent living program; OR three years experience in an organized program providing services to individuals with disabilities. Completion of a certificate program in disability awareness, social services, substance abuse or other behavioral services field from an accredited college substitutes for one year of the required experience. Any combination of training and experience that meet the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) may be substituted.

Individuals who do not meet the qualified standard must complete a professional development plan that outlines their course of study, to meet the standard within 6 years.

### **(d) Staff Development and Training**

#### **(1) A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology.**

Policies, procedures and activities ensure that all personnel employed receive appropriate and adequate training.

Competencies have been established for VR Counselor and Program Representative positions including specialty counselors. A competency based comprehensive staff development and training program provides both basic and continuing education for staff.

In 2005, AZRSA receives a 5-year grant for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) In-service Training, which includes funding for special projects/training. A performance based report of progress is provided for this grant annually.

The annual training plan is traditionally based on a training needs assessment for all staff. In addition, there is a comprehensive training needs assessment for counselors and partners working with individuals with severe mental illness. This is accomplished as part of the vocational plan development in each district for the AZRSA/Behavioral Health Interagency Agreement. Staff input is solicited for specialty counselor, supervisor, rehabilitation technician, PPT and secretary training sessions to insure that topics selected meet current needs. Program managers also provide input on training needs, as does the Governor's State Rehabilitation Council.

Two major initiatives in 2007 will result in statewide training for all staff, which will be provided in each district. These initiatives are the pilot of a new Performance Based Contract in Employment Services and the implementation of a new policy manual. Customer service training will be provided for all staff in 2007.

Region IX Regional Continuing Education program (RCEP) continues to be a valuable partner by assisting with six training sessions in the annual training plan, with some offered twice a year. In addition, this year RCEP is conducting a new counselor practicum. Plans are underway for a new class for leadership/mentoring training for non-supervisory staff to be implemented in 2007.

**Staff Development and Training is divided three groups:**

### **Basic Training**

Basic training includes: new employee orientation, a CORE training series for new counselors, a set of advanced core classes to supplement basic CORE, a rehabilitation technician CORE training, a secretary CORE training, a PPT CORE training, training on the AZRSA's client management information system (IRIS), and programmatic training for professional and clerical support staff. Employees also have access to training on a variety of computer software.

Training is provided on the Rehabilitation Act, regulations and state policy. Classes include sessions on assessment, vocational counseling, preparing your client for the job search and job placement, plan development, assistive technology, case management and case documentation. There is a focus on relationship management and client informed choice throughout all of the core curriculum modules. American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) are also covered in Counselor CORE. Rehabilitation Technicians attend the Counselor CORE in addition to the Rehabilitation Technician CORE.

Advanced CORE classes are offered with several topics provided two times a year. New counselors/representatives are required to attend, and more experienced staff often attend. The topics for these classes are:

- Ethics
- Assistive Technology Parts I and II
- Vocational Counseling Tools
- Supported Employment
- Counseling Skill Building Practicum (new)
- Cultural Diversity/Disability Culture
- Using Internet in Rehabilitation Practice
- Social Security 101
- Introduction to Vocational Guidance and Career Counseling
- Client Service Management
- Use of the Internet in Rehabilitation

Preparing your Client for Their Job Search is a new course in 2007 and it may become a required course. All staff must attend New Employee Orientation.

### **Skill Building and Continuing Education**

Skill building and continuing education for all levels of field staff is provided each year. The state's Arizona Government University (AZGU) offers a variety of professional development classes to all staff. Training sessions for supervisors are in the annual training plan, and new supervisors are required to complete the DES New Supervisor Academy within one year of hire or promotion. Central and district office staff also have training opportunities through AZGU and out-service training that meet their specific training needs. This past year training was approved in the areas of finance and accounting, information technology, grant writing, and management.

AZRSA partners with a variety of entities including but not limited to provide skill building and continuing education through the Annual Transition Conference in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education Special Student Services and the Annual Assistive Technology Summer Institute in partnership with Northern Arizona University and the Arizona Assistive Technology Project (AZTAP).

### **Career development**

AZRSA has established a career ladder in the rehabilitation counselor series. A program of educational assistance, career counseling, and use of educational plans assists staff in obtaining academic credit to facilitate career advancement. The DES educational assistance policy provides prepaid tuition and books.

As part of the plan for leadership development and capacity building, staff participates in management and leadership programs made available by Region IX RCEP and through the DES Office of Management and Development (OMD) in partnership with Arizona State University (ASU). Employees participate in the PETRA Graduate Certificate Programs in Rehabilitation Administration offered by RCEP IX which is funded by a Federal RSA grant. Supervisors attend RCEP IX Supervisory Academy for Rehabilitation.

## **(2) Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.**

To support staff development and other training activities, the AZRSA maintains a library of training resources and materials including videotapes, results of research, and best practices. Materials are disseminated to staff in training sessions, and by making resource materials available in local offices. Employees have access to the internet as a resource, and have been provided training and a resource manual for using the Internet in Rehabilitation.

## **(e.) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

**Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.**

The Arizona State personnel system facilitates recruitment of qualified staff who are bilingual. Efforts continue to increase the number of employees who are bilingual. A

salary stipend is paid to staff who use a second language at least 20% of their time.

If a bilingual staff member is not available AZRSA purchases the needed interpreting service from established contracts.

Video Relay Service (VRS) has been implemented in eight offices throughout the state in an effort to improve communication accessibility for persons who are deaf.

AZRSA is in the process of expanding this service to all rural offices so that consumers will be able to access services immediately instead of waiting for an appointment in the future when an interpreter can be scheduled.

Accessible forms/materials: All AZRSA materials, including training materials, are made available in alternative media. Each district has access to resources to Braille materials and to provide print in alternative media per client and staff request. The DES has translated materials into other languages. Staff are provided with accessible computers, note takers, ergonomic key boards and other devices as needed for accommodations. A new position has been established that has the responsibility to ensure all agency forms are accessible.

**(f) Coordination with Personnel Development Under The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

Transition from School-to-Work (STW) remains an important part of AZRSA's program of services. Competencies for STW counselors are in place and there are specialty counselors in each district. AZRSA works closely with the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services to provide opportunities for staff to remain current in transition policies and practices. These collaborations have resulted in conferences, specific trainings and joint projects including monthly meetings with transition staff.